

California Regional Water Quality Control Board – Santa Ana Region
Environmental Checklist

1. Project title:
Basin Plan Amendment - Update of the Total Dissolved Solids, Nitrogen Management Plan for the Santa Ana River Basin
2. Lead agency name and address:
Regional Water Quality Control Board – Santa Ana
3. Contact person and phone number:
**Hope Smythe
909-782-4493**
4. Project location:
Northern Orange County, Western Riverside County and Eastern San Bernardino County – all areas within the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board’s Jurisdiction
5. Project sponsor's name and address:
**California Regional Water Quality Control Board – Santa Ana Region
3737 Main Street, Suite 500
Riverside, CA 92501**
6. General plan designation: **N/A**
7. Zoning: **N/A**
8. Description of project:
The project consists of amendment of the Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) to incorporate revisions pertaining to Nitrogen and TDS management, including: (1) revised groundwater subbasin boundaries; (2) revised TDS and nitrate-nitrogen water quality objectives for groundwater; (3) revised TDS and nitrogen wasteload allocations; (4) monitoring program requirements; (5) “maximum benefit” adjustments to the TDS and nitrate-nitrogen water quality objectives for the Chino Basin and San Timoteo areas; (6) revisions to reach designations, objectives, beneficial uses for certain surface waters.
9. Surrounding land uses and setting:
The Santa Ana Region is approximately 2800 square miles. Although small, the region’s approximately five million residents make it one of the most densely populated regions in the state. There is rapid urban growth in the region supplanting existing agricultural areas. The region also contains the largest concentration of dairy animals in the country. The climate of the Santa Ana Region is classified as Mediterranean: generally dry in the summer with mild, wet winters. The average annual rainfall in the region is about fifteen inches, most of it occurring between November and March.
10. Other public agencies whose approval is required:
The proposed amendments are subject to approval by the State Water Resources Control Board, Office of Administrative Law, and, at least in part, by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

<input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics	<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality
<input type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Geology /Soils
<input type="checkbox"/> Hazards & Hazardous Materials	<input type="checkbox"/> Hydrology / Water Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Land Use / Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Noise	<input type="checkbox"/> Population / Housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation/Traffic
<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities / Service Systems		

DETERMINATION: (To be completed by the Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

 X I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant adverse effect on the environment.

Hope Smythe
Hope Smythe
Senior Environmental Scientist

Jun 5, 2004
Date

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS:

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
I. AESTHETICS -- Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?				X
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?				X
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?				X
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?				X
II. AGRICULTURE RESOURCES: In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. Would the project:				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?				X
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?				X
c) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use?				X
III. AIR QUALITY -- Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:				

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?				X
b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?				X
c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?				X
d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?				X
e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?				X
IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES -- Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?				X
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?			X	
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?			X	
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of			X	

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
native wildlife nursery sites?				
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?				X
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?				X
V. CULTURAL RESOURCES -- Would the project:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in ' 15064.5?				X
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to ' 15064.5?				X
c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?				X
d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?				X
VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS -- Would the project:				
a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				X
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.				X
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?				X
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?				X
iv) Landslides?				X

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b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?			X	
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?				X
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?				X
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?				X
VII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS – Would the project:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?				X
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?				X
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?				X
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?				X
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?				X
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private				

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?				X
g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				X
h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?				X
VIII. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY				
-- Would the project:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?				X
b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?				X
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?				X
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?				X
e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?				X
f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?				X
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard				

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?				X
h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?				X
i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?				X
j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?				X
IX. LAND USE AND PLANNING - Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?				X
b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?				X
c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?				X
X. MINERAL RESOURCES -- Would the project:				
				X
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?				X
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?				X
XI. NOISE - Would the project result in:				
a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or				X

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applicable standards of other agencies?				
b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?				X
c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?			X	
d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?			X	
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?				X
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?				X
XII. POPULATION AND HOUSING -- Would the project:				X
a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?			X	
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?				X
c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?				X
XIII. PUBLIC SERVICES				
a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to				X

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
Fire protection?				X
Police protection?				X
Schools?				X
Parks?				X
Other public facilities?				X
XIV. RECREATION --				
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?				X
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?				X
XV. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC -- Would the project:				X
a) Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?			X	
b) Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?				X
c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that results in substantial safety risks?				X
d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?				X

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?				X
f) Result in inadequate parking capacity?				X
g) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?				X
XVI. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS -				
- Would the project:				X
a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?				X
b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?			X	
c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?			X	
d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?				X
e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project(s) projected demand in addition to the provider(s) existing commitments?				X
f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project(s) solid waste disposal needs?				X
g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?				X
XVII. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE --				X
a) Does the project have the potential to degrade				

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the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?				X
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?				X
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?				X

Attachment – Environmental Checklist

Discussion of Environmental Impacts

Explanation of Environmental Checklist “Less than significant” Answers

IV. Biological Resources (b), (c), (d)

The proposed amendments would accommodate implementation of “maximum benefit” proposals by the Yucaipa Valley Water District (YVWD), the City of Beaumont and the San Timoteo Watershed Management Authority. As part of these proposals, YVWD and the City of Beaumont plan to reduce or eliminate existing wastewater discharges to the unlined reach of San Timoteo Creek. The reduction or elimination of these wastewater flows could adversely affect aquatic wildlife, adjacent riparian and wetland habitat, and use of the Creek as a wildlife corridor.

The proposed amendments require these agencies to submit proposed plans and schedules for reduction/elimination of these discharges for approval by the Regional Board. The Regional Board recognizes the need to assure protection of the beneficial uses of the Creek, including warmwater aquatic habitat and support of wildlife. The Board is also cognizant of the State Water Resources Control Board Order requiring maintenance of sufficient flows in the Creek (whether wastewater or water from other sources) to protect these uses. The plan/schedules approved by the Regional Board must assure that the agencies’ actions to modify their wastewater discharges to the Creek do not compromise the beneficial uses of the Creek. This may require the discharge of flows other than wastewater, an alternative being considered by the agencies.

The proposed maximum benefit- related amendments also include requirements for the construction of desalters, storm water recharge facilities, water distribution facilities and other facilities proposed by the agencies as part of their maximum benefit commitments. Construction of these facilities has the potential to result in adverse impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat, including wetlands. Each of these projects will be subject to individual CEQA review; any potential impacts will be required to be avoided/minimized and mitigated.

Adoption of the proposed amendment would result in new TDS and nitrate-nitrogen objectives for groundwater management zones and findings that ambient quality equals or exceeds these objectives in almost all the management zones. These new assimilative capacity findings may necessitate actions by parties/agencies wishing to continue or initiate discharges that affect these management zones to improve wastewater quality, implement alternative discharge methods, or to identify and implement suitable nitrogen and/or TDS offsets. These actions may require the construction of new facilities, including treatment plants, pipelines, etc., or modification of existing facilities. Construction of these facilities has the potential to result in adverse impacts on wildlife and their habitat. Again, each such project would be subject to individual CEQA review, providing site-specific analysis and development of mitigation measures, as necessary. While it is not feasible to explicitly define the magnitude of these potential impacts, it is important to point out that the potential facility impacts of the proposed amendments on the major wastewater dischargers in the Region were considered in the development of the amendments. Apart from those agencies proposing to implement maximum benefit proposals, the amendments are not expected to require significant facility construction/upgrades.

The proposed amendments also include certain changes to the Reach boundaries, water quality objectives, and beneficial uses for specific surface waters (Chino Creek, Temescal Creek and San Timoteo Creek).

These changes will affect the Regional Board's regulation of nitrogen and TDS discharges to these surface waters but will have no effect on wildlife or wildlife habitat. (This does not include any changes in regulation of ammonia discharges, will be limited so as to assure protection of aquatic wildlife.)

VI. Geology and Soils (b)

As discussed in the response to IV. Biological Resources, implementation of the proposed amendments would result in the construction of new facilities, including treatment facilities, desalters and pipelines. Construction activities would result in land disturbance, with the potential for increased soil erosion. Each of these projects will be subject to individual CEQA review, providing site-specific analysis and development of mitigation measures, as necessary.

XI. Noise (c), (d)

Again, the implementation of the proposed amendments would result in the construction of new facilities, including treatment facilities, desalters, and pipelines. Construction of these facilities would likely result in temporary increases in noise levels; operation of the facilities may result in permanent increases in ambient noise levels. However, each of these projects would be subject to CEQA review and any such impacts would be required to be avoided/minimized and appropriately mitigated.

XII. Population and Housing (a)

The proposed amendments accommodate the implementation of maximum benefit objectives and proposals by YVWD, the City of Beaumont, the San Timoteo Watershed Management Authority, the Chino Basin Watermaster and the Inland Empire Utilities Agency. The intent of these proposals is to assure long-term reliability and availability of water supplies to meet existing and anticipated demands, if and as projected population growth occurs in the agencies' respective service areas. By law, the availability of adequate water supplies must now be demonstrated to support new development proposals.

The proposed amendments do not directly result in increased population growth. The proposed amendments do allow responsible water supply agencies to implement programs designed to assure adequate water supplies and to make the demonstration required by law that such supplies would be available for new developments. In each case, new developments would be subject to CEQA review. The determination of whether such projects could proceed, and if so, under what mitigation circumstances, would occur through this process. In many cases, the population growth assumptions used by the agencies identified above to determine long-term water supply needs are based on new development projects that have already received CEQA certification.

XV. Transportation/Traffic (a)

As described in the discussion of XII. Population and Housing, the proposed amendments accommodate the implementation of maximum benefit objectives and proposals by YVWD, the City of Beaumont, the San Timoteo Watershed Management Authority, the Chino Basin Watermaster and the Inland Empire Utilities Agency. The intent of these proposals is to assure long-term reliability and availability of water supplies to meet existing and anticipated demands, if and as projected population growth occurs in the agencies' respective service areas. By law, the availability of adequate water supplies must now be demonstrated to support new development proposals. New development and the increased population associated with it can be expected to result in increased vehicular traffic and alternative transportation needs.

The proposed amendments do not directly result in increased population growth or the traffic/transportation effects associated with it. The proposed amendments do allow responsible water supply agencies to implement programs designed to assure adequate water supplies and to make the demonstration required by law that such supplies would be available for new developments. In each case, new developments would be subject to CEQA review, including the evaluation of traffic/transportation impacts. The determination of whether such projects could proceed, and if so, under what mitigation circumstances, would occur through this process.

XVI. Utilities and Service Systems (b), (c)

As described in the IV. Biological Resources discussion, implementation of the proposed amendments would result in the construction/modification of facilities. These included desalters, modifications to wastewater treatment plants, construction of water treatment facilities and storm water recharge facilities. Each of these projects would be subject to separate environmental review and approval, including appropriate mitigation for any identified adverse environmental effects.



Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority

COMMISSION FOR THE PROJECT AUTHORITY

EASTERN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT

INLAND EMPIRE UTILITIES AGENCY

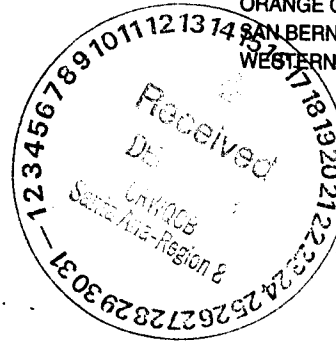
ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT

SAN BERNARDINO VALLEY MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT

WESTERN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT

December 11, 2003

Mr. Gerard Thibeault, Executive Director
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Santa Ana Region
3737 Main Street, Suite 500
Riverside, CA 92501-3348



GENERAL MANAGER

P. JOSEPH GRINDSTAFF

GNT ✓

cc Reg Bd

HAS ✓

CCWS

Dear Mr. Thibeault:

The Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) is pleased with the progress being made by the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) in finalizing the results of the TIN TDS Study and incorporating those results into a proposed Basin Plan Amendment. SAWPA has worked closely with the RWQCB staff and the multi-agency TIN TDS Task Force since the task force formation in 1995 to reach this conclusion. It is our belief that the new basin plan amendment which incorporates the TIN TDS Study results and maximum benefit analyses will provide improved science based updates to the ambient groundwater quality objectives and basin boundary conditions that will provide better water resource management for the region for years to come. Further, this effort will serve as a hallmark of watershed stakeholder and regulatory agency cooperation for other RWQCBs across the state.

We are encouraged to hear that the Basin Plan Amendment is proposed to be presented to the RWQCB Board for approval in January 2004. We recommend that the RWQCB Board provide its full support for approval of the Basin Plan Amendment at this meeting. It is also our understanding that a key component of the TIN TDS effort, the Reclamation Guidance Document, was not incorporated into the Basin Plan Amendment at this time to due to staff time limitations. We strongly encourage that the Reclamation Guidance Document be incorporated as a follow-on RWQCB Basin Plan Amendment as quickly as possible.

Significant time and resources were spent by the TIN TDS Task Force and the RWQCB staff in preparing the Reclamation Guidance Document as a guidance tool in meeting the State's and local agency's long term goal of promoting water reclamation while maintaining water quality in the basin. The guidance document will be indispensable as a reference manual to implementing water reclamation projects as water supplies become more and more stretched to meet increased water demands in our basin. We highly recommend that all RWQCB available staff resources be used to finalize the Reclamation Guidance Document and incorporate it as part of the Basin Plan as quickly as possible after the TIN TDS Basin Plan Amendment is approved.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and appreciate your agency's ongoing support to this important effort.

Sincerely,


P. Joseph Grindstaff
General Manager

PJG:MN:pb

RWQCB letter req approval

11615 Sterling Avenue, Riverside, CA 92503-4979 • (909) 354-4220
Administration FAX (909) 785-7076 • Planning FAX (909) 352-3422

